

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ISO-00 ICA-11 HEW-04 OES-09
AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 EB-08 SMS-01
/113 W

-----106476 141739Z /40

R 130534Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9971
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 7326

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, UR, AF, FR
SUBJ: AFGHAN/SOVIET CULTURAL AGREEMENT CONCLUDED

1. SUMMARY: BILATERAL AGREEMENTS FOR SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES REACHED DURING A VISIT TO MOSCOW BY AFGHAN MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND CULTURE MOHAMMAD HASSAN BAREQ-SHAFEYE UNDERSCORE THE GROWING TIES BETWEEN THE REVOLUTIONARY REGIME IN KABUL AND THE SOVIET UNION. END SUMMARY

2. THE NINE-DAY VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION BY BAREQ-SHAFEYE'S THREE-MAN AFGHAN DELEGATION (WHICH ALSO INCLUDED ABDUL KAYUM NOORZAI, SECOND DEPUTY MINISTER OF EDUCATION, AND MOHAMMAD AMIN AFGHANPOOR, DEPUTY MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND CULTURE) RESULTED PRINCIPALLY IN THE SIGNING OF A BILATERAL SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL AGREEMENT FOR 1978-79. ACCORDING TO AFGHAN PRESS REPORTS, THIS ACCORD "ENVISAGED EXCHANGES IN THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION, ART, CULTURE, AND PUBLIC HEALTH." A "NEWS BULLETIN" CONFIDENTIAL

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ISSUED BY THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN KABUL CLAIMED THAT AN AGREEMENT WAS ALSO SIGNED WHICH PROLONGED THE JOINT SOVIET-AFGHAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPEDITION FOR THE YEARS 1978-1982. THE SOVIET ACCOUNT FURTHER CONTENDS THAT THE SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE AGREEMENT REACHED IN MOSCOW BY BAREQ-SHAFEYE COVERS THE SAME YEARS, RATHER THAN JUST 1978-79 AS REPORTED IN THE AFGHAN MEDIA. MOREOVER, WHILE THE AFGHAN MEDIA GAVE FAIRLY STANDARD AND BLAND

COVERAGE TO THE VISIT ("FRUITFUL AND CONSTRUCTIVE TALKS ON ISSUES OF MUTUAL INTEREST"), THE SOVIET EMBASSY BULLETIN QUOTED BAREQ-SHAFEYE AS HAVING SAID THE AGREEMENTS "USHERED IN A NEW STAGE IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO STATES," AND ADDED THAT "FRIENDLY CONTACTS" DATED FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLO-MATIC RELATIONS, "AT THE SOURCE OF WHICH THE GREAT LENIN HAD STOOD."

3. COMMENT: THIS PARTICULAR BILATERAL AGREEMENT WITH THE USSR IS ONE OF THE FEW CONCLUDED BY THIS REGIME WHICH DOES NOT FALL WITHIN THE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FIELD. THE CONTRAST IN TONES BETWEEN THE AFGHAN MEDIA AND THE SOVIET EMBASSY "NEWS BULLETIN" (WHICH WAS A REPLAY OF AN AGENTSTVO PECHATI NOVOSTI ARTICLE) COULD REFLECT THIS REGIME'S SENSITIVITY TO PUBLICIZING TOO EXCESSIVELY THE DETAILS OF ITS GROWING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE USSR. MOREOVER, THE AFGHAN OMISSION OF ANY REFERENCE TO AN EXTENDED AGREEMENT COVERING JOINT ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION CAME AT A TIME WHEN THE GOVT MAY HAVE BEEN STALLING PERMISSION FOR A FRENCH TEAM TO RETURN TO THE TRADITIONAL FRENCH ARCHAEOLO-GICAL SITE AT AI KHANOM ON THE OXUS (PERMISSION, HOWEVER, HAS SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN GIVEN FOR THE FRENCH TO RETURN TO AI KHANUM, WHERE THEY HAVE BEEN WORKING FOR DECADES).
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AGREEMENT, CULTURAL EXCHANGES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 sep 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KABUL07326
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780374-0540
Format: TEL
From: KABUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780973/aaaachxu.tel
Line Count: 85
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 1bd0df51-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1456092
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AFGHAN/SOVIET CULTURAL AGREEMENT CONCLUDED
TAGS: PEPR, UR, AF, FR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/1bd0df51-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014